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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 000208

SIPDIS

FOR G/TIP AND EUR/SCE

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TAGS: PHUM PGOV HR

SUBJECT: CROATIA HEARS US ON TRAFFICKING

REF: A. 2003 STATE 217907

1B. 2003 ZAGREB 1795

1C. 2003 ZAGREB 2643

Classified By: Poloff Mitch Benedict for Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

Summary

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11. (SBU) On January 30, the Ambassador reviewed with Jadranka Kosor, Deputy Prime Minister, Croatia's record on trafficking in persons (TIP). Kosor acknowledged that Croatia will need to address the issue better, but otherwise offered little in substance other than to declare that she will be our point of contact on TIP. The new GOC is still organizing itself on this issue, but we have raised TIP at the highest levels to highlight its importance to the USG, and the need for Croatia to take action against trafficking. End Summary.

Ambassador Highlights Importance of Combating Trafficking

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12. (SBU) On January 30, the Ambassador raised the issue of TIP in his initial courtesy call with Jadranka Kosor, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister for Family, Veterans Affairs, and Intergenerational Solidarity. Kosor has responsibility for human rights issues in general, and trafficking in persons in particular. The Ambassador made clear that the issue is a priority for the USG, and that we have been concerned about the Government's lack of implementation of its National Action Plan to suppress trafficking in persons. Kosor indicated her desire to work closely with us on anti-trafficking programs and activities.

The MFA's New Found Interest

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13. (SBU) On January 29, we met Andrea Bekic, MFA Desk Officer for the US, to discuss Croatia's efforts, or lack thereof, to combat TIP in Croatia. Bekic expressed concern that Croatia may be moved from Tier 2 to Tier 3 on the annual TIP report. She wanted to know our intentions, as well as what Croatia must do to demonstrate that it is vigorously working to eliminate all forms of TIP. We reviewed with Bekic the benchmarks (Ref A) that we delivered to the MFA and Government Human Rights Office in August 2003 (Ref B), and discussed additional measures -- such as organizational reforms, and additional funding -- that Croatia could take now to begin much needed implementation of the National Action Plan.

14. (C) We learned later from the local office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) that the MFA is arguing within the government that the Government Office for Human Rights should be disbanded. Presumably most of what the Human Rights Office considers its "competencies" -- such as attending international conferences and "cooperating" with the international community -- would fall to the MFA. IOM also told us that the chair of the Croatian Helsinki Committee met with Kosor immediately following her appointment, and told her the Head of the Government Office for Human Rights must be replaced. In our meetings with Human Rights Office staff, there is clear unease and uncertainty about the future of the office. We have made the point in our meetings with GOC interlocutors that coordination and cooperation is necessary and good, but the new government must begin to take action soon to implement anti-trafficking activities.

Comment

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15. (C) The new government is still in the early stages of filling positions and assigning responsibilities, but we have focused the new Government early on TIP as an important USG interest, and confirmed that we expect the GOC to implement the former government's National Action Plan to combat trafficking. The Ambassador raised TIP in his initial meetings with the Prime Minister, who demonstrated a familiarity with the issue and promised to provide us with a point of contact for further discussion. The meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Kosor focused almost exclusively on

TIP, and she twice told the Ambassador that she is our point of contact on TIP-related issues, although she had little of substance to say during the Ambassador's January 30 meeting with her. Bekic's eagerness to meet on TIP may indicate an expanded willingness on the part of the MFA to be involved on the issue. Previously only the MFA's Department of Human Rights engaged with us on TIP, and then mostly for the

purpose of challenging the basis on which Croatia was included in the Department's annual TIP report (Ref C, para 9c).  
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